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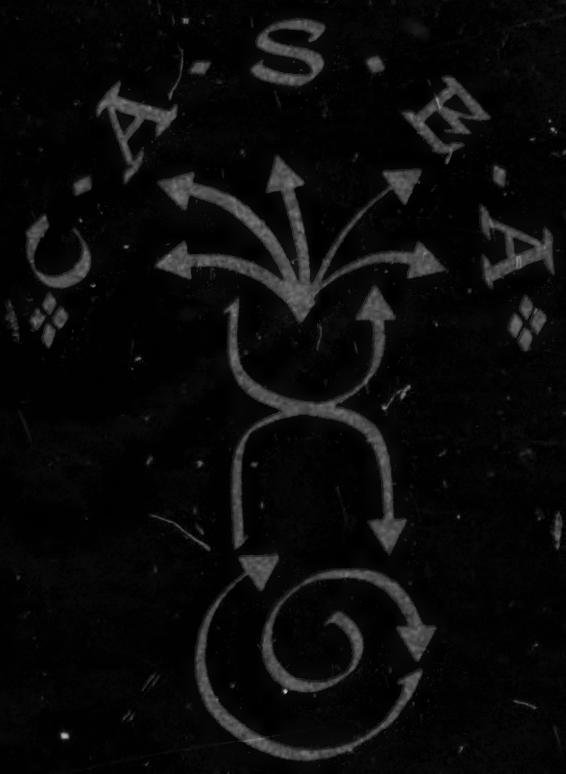
TWO TYPES OF INCENTIVE SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SKILL MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORK-FORCE AT TWO JUNIOR COLLEGES WERE REPORTED. ONE OF THE INSTITUTIONS HAD A MERIT-TYPE INCENTIVE SYSTEM, WHILE THE OTHER DID NOT DIFFERENTIATE AMONG THE VARIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF ITS FACULTY. THE LATTER BASED COMPENSATION ON ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND THE AMOUNT OF PREVIOUS TEACHING EXPERIENCE. THREE COMPONENTS WERE INDIVIDUALLY TREATED--(1) SUBSCRIBING TO AND READING RELEVANT JOURNALS, (2) ENGAGING IN FORMAL STUDIES, AND (3) PARTICIPATING IN CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS. DATA WERE GATHERED BY SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH 87 OF A TOTAL OF 230 FULL-TIME FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS FROM BOTH COLLEGES. THE RESULTS INDICATED THAT THE COLLEGE USING THE MERIT SYSTEM ELICITED A GREATER COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING THEIR EXPERTISE. FORMAL STUDIES WERE VIEWED AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE SALARY BY THE TEACHERS IN THE NONMERIT COLLEGE. (RS)



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INCENTIVE SYSTEMS IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: A LOOK AT TWO TYPES AND THEIR APPARENT IMPACT UPON SKILL MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORK-FORCE

by

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An organization's formal incentive system has long been regarded as an important vehicle for the securement from the work-force of appropriate goal oriented activity.[1] One needs only to observe the wide variety of incentive schemes in use in many commercial enterprises. There has been however, a resistance on the part of many organized professionals in educational organizations -- notably those associated with the public schools in both the United States and Canada -- to seriously consider various alternatives to existing incentive systems, particularly when the alternatives contain "merit" or performance evaluation clauses.[2]

A study recently concluded by this writer[3] has produced some data which may encourage educators, particularly those who are concerned with improving the nation's schools through organizational refinements, to continue explorative studies related to the viability of the incentives which schools and colleges, both public and private, are now providing their professional staffs. Such studies, it is believed, hold potential "breakthroughs" similiar to those which are being uncovered in such areas as the curriculum and teaching technology.

Two public junior colleges which shared a number of common characteristics served as the site of the study now being reported.[4] Though the colleges were alike in a number of important ways, their incentive systems were dissimilar. One college, which will be referred to as "University College" (UC), had an incentive system containing certain merit provisions. The other college, "Secondary College" (SC), employed no merit features in its incentive program.*

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*The names given to the two colleges are intended to aid the reader in recalling the differentiating characteristics of each of their incentive systems: UC used a system similar to the one used by many universities; SC's was patterned after many secondary schools.

University College's faculty members are evaluated according to their contribution to the purposes of the organization (in the case of both colleges, teaching was the primary activity). Those who fail to demonstrate to the satisfaction of an evaluation team, made up of senior administrators and respective department chairmen, certain specified requirements, such as maintaining their skill or making adequate preparation for their teaching responsibilities, for example, are not likely to receive advancement in rank or in financial remuneration. Others, though, who give concrete evidence of maintaining their academic expertise, or, of discharging their teaching and counseling duties in an effective manner, for example, are eligible for promotion to a higher teaching rank as well as an accompanying increase in salary. Certain persons, who are judged to have rendered exceptional service and appear to have a potential for continued high-level "productivity," may be awarded advancement earlier than might normally be anticipated. Such action was not without precedent.

Faculty members at Secondary College receive monetary recognition for their services, though there are no differentiating titles or ranks attendant with such recognition. The amount or the frequency of salary increases is not dependent upon the quality or quantity of one's contribution. Rather, the amount of an individual's formal training and teaching experience are the primary determinants. There is no attempt to gauge the amount of reward to the "production level" of the teacher. In fact, there is a deliberate attempt to avoid any practice which might imply differential treatment. The norm of equality permeates the formal organization, except in "promotions" from teaching to counseling or administrative assignments.

Thus, University College's system of incentives has distinct merit features, including the granting of academic titles. Secondary College does not award titles to its participants, nor does it employ any means whereby

variations in achievement could be allocated differential rewards -- either status or material in kind.

Variations between the two faculties were noted not only with respect to attitudes members held on a number of topics but also with respect to a number of activities. The types of activities in which variations were found to exist include the following: skill maintenance, community service, student counseling, the faculty senate, and the teaching divisions.

The findings, which will be discussed in this presentation, surround the variations that were noted in the skill maintenance activities among the faculty members of the two colleges. Time limitations preclude any treatment of the other findings in this paper.[5]

There are many ways in which a professional in an educational institution may keep up-to-date in his field or specialty. Three of the most frequently followed, and which were specifically studied, are: subscribing to and the reading of appropriate journals, formal studies, and participating in conferences and seminars. Data on these activities were collected during depth interviews carried out with 48 of SC's 119 faculty members and 39 of UC's 111. These interviewees, randomly selected, represented a cross section of each of the staffs. Also, personnel records were found to be valuable sources of data.

Table 1

A Comparison of the Number of Faculty Members Who Subscribe to Journals*

	Secondary College %	University College %	N
Professional Journals in Education	60	48	48
Journals of the disciplines	37	56	40
Never Subscribed to Journals or recently discontinued subscribing	27	15	19
	N= 48	N=39	

*Since some faculty members subscribed to journals of both types the percentages do not add up to 100.

With respect to the first of the three activities, subscribing to and reading scholarly journals, the findings revealed that a significantly higher number of teachers at University College subscribed to and demonstrated a familiarity with the journals of their particular disciplines than did teachers at Secondary College. Some 27% of the faculty at SC had never subscribed to journals or had recently discontinued their subscriptions as compared with 15% of the faculty at UC. Both faculties received journals of the various educational associations -- national as well as state, though there were 12% more teachers at SC who did so. However, many teachers pointed out that they really did not subscribe to those journals -- rather, the journals were one of the privileges attendant with membership.[7] Membership for a surprisingly large number seemed to be viewed primarily in terms of the insurance benefits it provided.

A search of the personnel files and an analysis of the interview data revealed, with respect to the second of the three skill maintenance activities, formal studies, that 46% of the SC faculty had not, in the past two years, continued any formal studies as compared with 18% of the UC group. This fact is the more curious when juxtaposed with the fact that both faculties held a comparable number of baccalaureate and advanced degrees.

Table 2

A Comparison of the Number of Faculty Who Are Undertaking Advanced Studies*

	Secondary College	University College	N
	%	%	
No advanced study in past two years	46	18	29
Advanced study emphasizing credit	44	28	32
Emphasizing an area of study	10	54	26
Faculty members who have completed, are completing, or intend to complete course requirements leading to an administrative credential	58	18	35
	N = 48	N = 39	

*Since the faculty members who have completed, are completing or intend to complete course requirements leading to an administrative credential are already counted in one or the other of the first two items in this table, the percentages do not add up to 100.

There were, however, many teachers in the two colleges pursuing higher education programs. Two groups were singled out in each college: those who were concerned primarily with securing additional credits for salary purposes

and those who were primarily interested in increasing their competence in their particular teaching field.[8] UC teachers gave convincing evidence not only of more interest in advanced studies but in studies that would extend their expertise. (Of the UC teachers, 54% emphasized, in the interviews, advanced study for purposes of increasing their competence as compared with 10% of SC's faculty.)

Not all were content to enhance their teaching careers. Many of the men at SC were directing their advanced studies toward fulfilling the state's requirements for an administrative credential. Only 18% of UC males as compared with 58% of SC's sought licenses which would permit them to administer institutions of higher learning should such occasions arise. This unusually high interest in administrative work on the part of SC male teachers will not surprise researchers familiar with the career aspirations of men in many of the public schools.[9]

The third activity investigated, attending conferences and seminars, was not engaged in to the same extent by the professionals in SC as was the case with the UC group. At least in recent years, this method was not employed by some 46% of the teachers in the former as compared with 26% in the latter. It is to be noted, though, that a greater percentage of teachers at SC had attended conferences which had been sponsored by professional education associations than had the UC teachers. Some 51% of the UC group, however, had taken part in the in-service activities of discipline oriented societies as compared with 21% of the SC teachers.

Table 3

A Comparison of the Number of Faculty Who Attend Conferences and Seminars*

	Secondary College	University College	N
	%	%	
No attendance in past 2 years	46	26	32
Recent participation in conferences sponsored by:			
- Professional Education Association	38	26	28
- Other societies and groups in subject-area fields	21	51	30
	N = 48	N = 39	

*Since some faculty attended conferences in both categories the percentages do not add up to 100.

How can such differences by accounted for? The colleges had been originally selected for this study because of the comparableness of their size, purposes, governance and locale, economic resources, human resources, and maturity (or, experience). It was important, moreover, to determine the comparability of the backgrounds of the professional staffs -- for if these were greatly dissimilar, the problem of assessing the impact of variations in incentive provisions of the two organizations would have been even more difficult. There were found to exist, however, no major differences with respect to such factors as: the types and locations of the preparational institutions from which the teachers had graduated, the number or kinds of undergraduate and graduate degrees held by the teachers, or in the amount or type of professional experience they had obtained prior to their present employment.[10] The colleges did, however, make use of quite different incentive systems to elicit cooperative behavior from their professional staffs.

Some extracts from the interview data gathered at Secondary College will next be presented. These sample responses provide some evidence as to how the absence of control mechanisms and the inflexibility of the reward structure, for example, have influenced the behavior of these professionals.

> (1) I did take one advanced course in English several years ago, but what a lot of work. And when I found out that other (easier) courses would give me credit as far as this college is concerned, I tried to pick other kinds of courses. . .
>
> (2) Why guidance courses? Actually, they might come in handy sometime. There's more money in guidance work on this campus than in teaching physics, you know.
>
> (3) Journals? I used to take a few. Every now and again I get the feeling I'm losing touch -- but I don't think my teaching is any worse than it used to be. It's hard to tell -- no one seems to care much.
>
> (4) Conferences are a waste of time -- a person needs to get away from the office, as it were. As long as we do our job here no one bothers us. Actually, some people get away with murder -- but, then, there aren't any medals for people who break their backs. I found that out when I first began teaching.

To read the interview data from University College is to enter a different world, one which seems to espouse different beliefs and even to hold different values. Several of the provisions of UC's incentive system appear to have had an effect upon the beliefs and actions of the faculty whose quotations follow.

> (1) Administration courses? I'm in geology . . . I have trouble keeping up in that field much less branching out. At any rate, it wouldn't help my future here. If I keep up my present record here I've been told I'll make the associateship next year.
>
> (2) If it's what kind of a teacher I am you want to know, and if you wouldn't think I'm bragging, here is the report I got from last year's evaluation team. There are too few opportunities in our profession where we receive recognition for our efforts -- particularly recognition based on some concrete evidence of how we actually serve our students. That is one reason why a report such as this means so much to me.

(3) Do I think it is a fair system? If it wasn't we'd raise such a row with the Old Man that he'd get rid or it. Of course it's fair. I haven't got the full professorship, but I know I have the drive and I believe the ability to get it.

(4) This summer I hope to spend several weeks in a seminar on the historical plays of Shakespeare at (name of university). This should help me get additional background for a course I've been asked to offer in the non-credit propram we have here for interested adults in the community.

The study reported herein, though limited and preliminary, has generated some questions believed to be worthy of a more rigorous treatment.

1. To what extent are professionals in education self motivated? To what extent are they responsive (or unresponsive) to organizational-type incentives? This present study suggests there is a wide variation in the extent to which 87 professionals who were interviewed were self motivated. Further, there is a strong indication that many activities of these teachers are at least indirectly related to the structure and the provisions of the incentive system of their particular institution.

2. Why do so many men aspire to a career outside of the classroom? Is there any relationship between this phenomenon and the lack of a distinctive career route for classroom teachers as well as the prevalence of salary differentials which favor non-teaching activities? This study at least suggests that such a relationship may indeed exist.

3. For many professionals the subject of performance evaluation is indeed a very sensitive one. What are the bases for this hypersensitivity in the case of professionals in educational institutions? Many of the arguments commonly put forth that question the "professionalness" of merit salaries, for example, did not obtain in the case of University College. A social system's propensity to seek to accommodate or resolve imbalance of all sorts was not lacking in either of the two college organizations.

If education's product, knowledge, is, as has been voiced by another, "the most powerful single element in our culture," then, surely there is a need to learn more about the organizational conditions under which professionals in educational institutions are best able to produce and transmit that knowledge. The incentive system is not the least of the organizational conditions which are deserving of closer attention.

SUMMARY

INCENTIVE SYSTEMS IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: A LOOK AT TWO TYPES AND THEIR APPARENT IMPACT UPON SKILL MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORK-FORCE

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The study, from which this paper is derived, examined the impact which different organizational incentive systems had upon the attitudes and activities of the professional staffs of two institutions of higher learning. One of the public junior colleges had a merit-type incentive system; the other did not differentiate among the various contributions of its faculty: the extent of academic preparation and amount of previous teaching experience determined the size of the compensation.

Variations between the two faculty groups with respect to skill maintenance activities are expanded on in the present paper. Three components of this activitiy are individually treated: subscribing to and reading relevant journals, engaging in formal studies, and participating in conferences and seminars.

The college employing the merit provisions appeared to elicit from its professional staff members a greater commitment to maintaining their expertise. A significantly greater proportion of the teachers in the non-merit college discontinued early in their careers any contact with journals or their colleagues at conferences and seminars. Formal studies were often viewed as the means to enhance salary; there was, in many cases, little regard for the relevance of those studies to one's teaching field.

What is the basis for the sensitivity which manny professional workers feel toward the subject of merit pay? This and other related questions are posed for further consideration.

NOTES

(1) Many theorists hold that the incentive system is one of the key variables which must be accounted for in any attempt to analyse the dynamics of all formal organizations. Barnard, for example, maintained that the worker had to be induced to cooperate in reaching those specific objectives for which the organization had been established to achieve.

> The egotistical motives of self-preservation and self-gratification are dominating forces; on the whole, organizations can exist only when consistent with the satisfaction of these motives, unless, always the basic strategic factor in organizations. Regardless of his history or his obligations he must be induced to cooperate, or there can be no cooperation... The contributions of personal efforts which constitute the energies of organizations are yielded by individuals because of incentives. (Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938 , p. 139. The underlining in the quotation has been added.)

Clark and Wilson agree:

> All viable organizations must provide tangible or intangible incentives to individuals in exchange for contributions of individual activity to the organization... Many (kinds of) incentives are offered to satisfy the variety of motives that help to maintain participation in the enterprise. (Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson, "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations, Administrative Science Quarterly, 6 1961 , pp. 130, 150.)

(2) See, for example, Charles S. Benson, The Cheerful Prospect (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), pp. 36,37.

(3) Herman Arnold Wallin, "The Dynamics of Incentive Systems: A Comparative Study of Variations in Professionalism in Two Institutions of Higher Learning." An unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, September, 1965.

(4) The two colleges, located in the southwest of the United States, were matched on the following variables: size, governance, locale, wealth, age, objectives, faculty qualification, and recruitment practices. See note (10) for details.

(5) In a paper which has been prepared for reading at another national meeting I have reported on behavioral variations between the two faculties with respect to community service and student counseling. That paper is entitled, "Providing Incentives for Professionals in Two-year Colleges: A Case Study of Two Approaches and Their Relative Effectiveness in Securing Service and Client Oriented Behavior." Vairiations in attitudes the faculty members hold regarding commitment to skill, the administration, the college, professional rewards, and colleagues are the subject of a third paper which has just been completed.

(6) Data was gathered over a 3 month period during which time some 87 interviews were carried out. Semi-structured interviews, ranging in length from 1-3 hours, were held with 87 out of a total of 230 full-time faculty and administrators. The interviewees were selected at random from each of the teaching and administrative divisions within each college.

(7) The interview guide had on it the following probe, "Which (journals) are most helpful to you in your job?" Some 28 of the 48 teachers in explaining why they did not name journals they received from professional organizations in answering the above question, said that they did not subscribe to those journals -- they "came with membership."

(8) Each faculty member who claimed advanced study in the last two years was asked why he undertook this activity.

(9) See the following, for instance:

Burton R. Clark, "Sociology of Education" in Robert E. L. Faris (ed.) Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), p. 756.

Myron Lieberman, Education as a Profession (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 373-416.

Herman Arnold Wallin, "Nominations as a Technique for Identifying Potential Principals," Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, 1962, pp. 38, 39.

(10) The following table provides some data on the comparableness of the two colleges:

	Secondary College	University College
Age of college	Both were founded in the early 1920's.	
Number of full-time faculty	119	111
Number of full-time students	1850	1800
Locale	Located within 25 miles of each other.	
Governance	Public, part of a state system of higher education, locally controlled through an elected Board.	
Assessed property valuation per average daily attendance	$108,000	$100,000
1964-65 Salaries		
Actual median	$10,300	$10,300
Actual mean	$10,000	$ 9,900
Academic Background of staff		
no degree	2%	5%
A.B. degree (out of state)	2%	3%
A.B. degree (in state)	21%	15%
M.A. degree (out of state)	21%	23%
M.A. degree (in state)	52%	49%
Doctor's degree (in state)	2%	5%
Total	100%	100%

(10) table continued

	Secondary College	University College
Professional Experience		
(1) High School only	42%	51%
(2) Two-yr college only	4%	5%
(3) 4-yr college or university only	10%	8%
(4) Both (1) and (2)	15%	15%
(5) Both (2) and (3)	8%	3%
(6) No previous teaching experience	21%	18%
Total	100%	100%